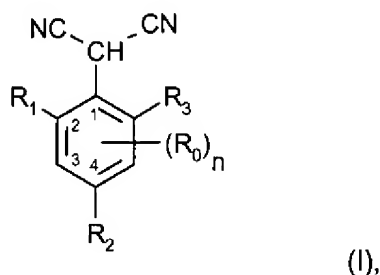


## IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula I



wherein

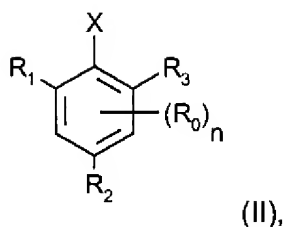
each  $R_0$ , independently of any other(s), is halogen,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ -haloalkyl, cyano- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ haloalkenyl, cyano- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ haloalkynyl, cyano- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl, hydroxy, hydroxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy, nitro, amino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylamino, di( $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl)amino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylsulfonylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylaminosulfonyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxycarbonyl- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxycarbonyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxycarbonyl- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxycarbonyl- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl, cyano, carboxy, phenyl or an aromatic ring containing 1 or 2 hetero atoms selected from the group nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur, wherein the latter two aromatic rings may be substituted by  $C_1$ - $C_3$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_3$ haloalkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_3$ alkoxy,  $C_1$ - $C_3$ haloalkoxy, halogen, cyano or by nitro; or

$R_0$ , together with the adjacent substituents  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  and  $R_3$ , forms a saturated or unsaturated  $C_3$ - $C_6$ hydrocarbon bridge that may be interrupted by 1 or 2 hetero atoms selected from the group nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur and/or substituted by  $C_1$ - $C_4$ alkyl;

$R_1$ ,  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are each independently of the others hydrogen, halogen,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ cycloalkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ haloalkyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ haloalkenyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxycarbonyl- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl, cyano- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl, nitro- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ haloalkynyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxycarbonyl- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl, cyano- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl, nitro- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ halocycloalkyl, hydroxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylthio- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl, cyano,  $C_1$ - $C_4$ alkylcarbonyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxycarbonyl, hydroxy,  $C_1$ - $C_{10}$ alkoxy,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyloxy,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyloxy,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ haloalkoxy,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ haloalkenyloxy,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy, mercapto,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylthio,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ haloalkylthio,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylsulfinyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylsulfonyl, nitro, amino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylamino, di( $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl)amino or phenoxy, wherein the phenyl ring may be substituted by  $C_1$ - $C_3$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_3$ haloalkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_3$ alkoxy,  $C_1$ - $C_3$ haloalkoxy, halogen, cyano or by nitro;

$R_2$  may additionally be phenyl, naphthyl or a 5- or 6-membered aromatic ring that may contain 1 or 2 hetero atoms selected from the group nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur, wherein the phenyl ring, the naphthyl ring and the 5- or 6-membered aromatic ring may be substituted by halogen,  $C_3$ - $C_8$ cycloalkyl, hydroxy, mercapto, amino, cyano, nitro or by formyl; and/or the phenyl ring, the naphthyl ring and the 5- or 6-membered aromatic ring may be substituted by  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy, hydroxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylthio,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylsulfinyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylsulfonyl, mono- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylamino, di- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl( $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl)amino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyloxy, hydroxy- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyloxy,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylcarbonyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylthio,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylsulfinyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylsulfonyl, mono- or di- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl( $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyl)amino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylcarbonylamino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylcarbonyl( $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl)amino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyloxy, hydroxy- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_4$ - $C_6$ alkynyloxy,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylcarbonyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylthio,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylsulfinyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylsulfonyl, mono- or di- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl( $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyl)amino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylcarbonylamino or by  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylcarbonyl( $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl)amino; and/or the phenyl ring, the naphthyl ring and the 5- or 6-membered aromatic ring may be substituted by halo-substituted  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy, hydroxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylthio,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylsulfinyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylsulfonyl, mono- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylamino, di- $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkylcarbonyl( $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl)amino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyloxy, hydroxy- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyloxy,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylcarbonyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylthio,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylsulfinyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylsulfonyl, mono- or di- $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl( $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkenyl)amino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylcarbonylamino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenylcarbonyl( $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl)amino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyloxy, hydroxy- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyl,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkoxy- $C_4$ - $C_6$ alkynyloxy,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylcarbonyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylthio,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylsulfinyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylsulfonyl, mono- or di- $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynylamino,  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl( $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyl)amino,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylcarbonylamino or  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkynylcarbonyl( $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl)amino; and/or the phenyl ring, the naphthyl ring and the 5- or 6-membered aromatic ring may be substituted by a radical of formula  $COOR_{50}$ ,  $CONR_{51}$ ,  $SO_2NR_{53}R_{54}$  or  $SO_2OR_{55}$ , wherein  $R_{50}$ ,  $R_{51}$ ,  $R_{52}$ ,  $R_{53}$ ,  $R_{54}$  and  $R_{55}$  are each independently of the others  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl or  $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyl or halo-, hydroxy-, alkoxy-, mercapto-, amino-, cyano-, nitro-, alkylthio-, alkylsulfinyl- or alkylsulfonyl-substituted  $C_1$ - $C_6$ alkyl,  $C_2$ - $C_6$ alkenyl or  $C_3$ - $C_6$ alkynyl; and n is 0, 1 or 2,

by reaction of a compound of formula II



wherein

$R_0$ ,  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$ ,  $R_3$  and  $n$  are as defined and  $X$  is a leaving group, with malonic acid dinitrile in an inert diluent in the presence of a palladium catalyst and a base, which process comprises using as the base a hydroxide of an alkali metal or a mixture of hydroxides of alkali metals and using as the palladium catalyst a palladium(II) dihalide, palladium(II) acetate, palladium(II) sulfate, bis(triphenylphosphine)palladium(II) dichloride, bis(tricyclopentylphosphine)palladium(II) dichloride, bis(tricyclohexylphosphine)palladium(II) dichloride, bis(dibenzylideneacetone)palladium(0) or tetrakis(triphenylphosphine)palladium(0).

2. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein, in the compound of formula II,  $X$  is halogen;  $R_{10}S(O)_2O^-$  wherein  $R_{10}$  is methyl, halomethyl,  $C_4F_9-(n)$ , phenyl or phenyl substituted from one to three times by halogen, methyl or by halomethyl; or is mono-, di- or tri-arylmethoxy.

3. (Original) A process according to claim 2, wherein  $X$  is chlorine, bromine, iodine,  $CF_3S(O)_2O^-$  (triflate),  $CF_3(CF_2)_3S(O)_2O^-$  (nonaflate),  $p$ -tolyl- $S(O)_2O^-$  (tosylate),  $(C_6H_5)_2CHO^-$ ,  $(CH_3-C_6H_4)_2CHO^-$ ,  $(C_6H_5)_3CO^-$  (trityl) or  $(CH_3-C_6H_4)_3CO^-$ .

4. (Original) A process according to claim 3, wherein  $X$  is chlorine, bromine or iodine.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the palladium catalyst is prepared *in situ* from palladium(II) or palladium(0) compounds by complexing with phosphine ligands.

7. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the palladium catalyst is used in an amount of from 0.001 to 100 mol% based on the compound of formula II.

8. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein as diluent there is used an aliphatic, cycloaliphatic or aromatic hydrocarbon, an aliphatic halohydrocarbon, a nitrile, an ether, an alcohol, a

ketone, an ester or a lactone, an N-substituted lactam, an amide, an acyclic urea, a sulfoxide or water or a mixture of those diluents.

9. (Original) A process according to claim 8, wherein as an aromatic hydrocarbon there is used an ether, an N-substituted lactam, an amide, an acyclic urea or a sulfoxide.

10. (Original) A process according to claim 9, wherein N-methylpyrrolidone is used.

11. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein as base there is used sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide or a mixture of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide.

12. (Original) A process according to claim 11, wherein sodium hydroxide is used as the base.

13. (Original) A process according to claim 10, wherein the base is used in an equivalent amount or in an excess of from 2 to 10 equivalents in relation to malonic acid dinitrile.

14. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out at a temperature of from 0° to 250°C.

15. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the reaction of the malonic acid dinitrile with a compound of formula II is carried out at elevated pressure.